The Portfolio Connection

Newsletter

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Summer Madness!

Set Prices Slashed!

Throughout July and August you can make big savings on *Portfolio Connection* program sets. Until the end of August this year, set prices for subscribers will be just **£3.50** per set and for non-subscribers **£4.00** per set! What is more, the usual 'order four sets and get one free' offer will still apply. This is a good opportunity to buy those sets you've been meaning to get round to, but remember - you only have until August 31st.

Memory Card Price Breakthrough

The Compax 128k Advanced Memory Card is the best value in low-cost Portfolio memory storage that we have seen for a long time. They offer a considerable saving over the standard 128k card and are more advanced in the features offered. Turn to page 2 for more information.....

The Optrol 524k Flash Memory Card, though more expensive, offers 8 times the storage space of a 128k card. and is reviewed on Pages 3 & 4 of this issue.

HyperList Now Available

HyperList, the outliner/ideas organiser from Atari USA, is now available from *The Portfolio Connection*. We have a full review on pages 5 & 6.

BSE Competition Winners!

At last we have some winners in our BSE Interface competition. Turn to page 9 for full details.....

We're Almost Famous!

For those of you that missed it, we got a nice (and unexpected) mention in Phil South's Amiga Column in the June Issue of Computer Shopper magazine - thanks Phil! Phil has been working on connecting his Portfolio to his Amiga and has come up with a useful pin-out diagram for an Amiga/Portfolio connection cable which works.

We are also given a substantial mention in the July issue of Practical PC in their 'User Group News' section. Unlike some we've seen, its nicely laid out and gives a reasonable amount of information on the groups covered.

Parallel/Serial Shortage

As some of you know only too well, we are experiencing a national shortage of parallel and serial interfaces. We expect to get some very soon now so hang on in!

Keep in Touch

Let us know if there is anything you would like to see in either the Newsletter or our catalogue and we'll do our best to make it happen!

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New This Issue:

Two exciting new sets this issue:

New Sets

PC4 - PC Accessories 4

- **Agenda Macros** - set of three macros to export data from Lotus Agenda to Portfolio address book and diary files.
- **Big** - this amazing program allows you to use your desktop monitor and keyboard with the Portfolio. A serial interface is required. Once loaded, the Portfolio screen appears large as life on your desktop. Use of your desktop keyboard is optional.
- **Oszi** - this is a demo, for both Portfolio and PC, of the Oscilloscope mentioned in last issue's 'News' section (page 2).
- **Sleek** - this program will reformat a document to any desired line length. It is very fast in operation and is useful both for reformatting files from the Portfolio for use on the desktop and vice versa. This program is excellent and it is a great shame that it does not work on the Portfolio itself.
- **Timebill** - this is a Microsoft Access database for importing timelogs created by TRS (in Set AP2). It is included as a self-extracting file to save space.

WD5 - Wordprocessing 5

- **2Col** - format and print files in two columns. A number of other options are available.
- **BLPM** - The Big Little Print Machine is a great file viewer for the Portfolio. Allows three viewing sizes - the smallest being 60x10. Also has a bookmark feature to enable you return to the same place in a large file. Clever bar shows both time and amount of file left.

/Continued on Page 7

Top Ten Sets

❶	⇔	**Games 1**
❷	⇧	**!!Applications 5!!**
❸	⇧	**PBasic 1**
	⇧	**Applications 3**
	⇧	**Utilities 2**
❻	⇩	**PC Accessories 1**
	⇩	**Wordprocessing 1**
❽	⇧	**PBasic 2**
❾	⇧	**ST Transfer**
❿	⇧	**Graphics 3**

AP5 Almost Does It!

Yes folks, our new Set AP5 almost knocked Games 1 off the top spot at last but Games 1 made it by the narrow margin of just one set!

NEWS

£79.95 Memory Card Bargain!

The new Compax 128k Advanced Memory Cards are now available from *The Portfolio Connection.* They offer significant advantages over the existing standard 128k cards, not the least of which is a price tag of just £79.95 including VAT & P+P! However, these excellent cards offer additional advantages.

There is no need to replace the internal battery on the new memory cards as they use a new 'ACTIVE METALS' rechargeable battery which will recharge automatically whenever it is inserted in your Palmtop. As the power consumption of the card is about 11uA (less than the power left in a discharged AA cell from your Palmtop!) it will not noticeably affect the life of your AA batteries.

Data stored on the memory card will last for one year from the time you remove it from the internal A: or B: drive. Whenever the card is inserted in your drive, it will regain the lost power within 5-10 minutes (depending on the amount of time it was left outside the A: or B: drive). The recharging process is totally transparent to the user and will not affect the usage or data stored on the card in any way.

Finally, the new Compax Advanced Memory Cards have an innovative Write Protect circuitry, which will automatically write-protect your data as soon as you remove the memory card from your Port.

These new cards represent a major breakthrough in memory card storage for the Portfolio and we expect demand to be very high so, if you want one, send us your order promptly to avoid delay.

Optrol Flash Cards - Now Available

Staying with memory cards for a moment, we are now able to obtain the new Optrol Flash Memory Cards. The price of these high capacity 524k cards is just £179.95 which is about £10 less than we thought! The Flash Memory Cards do not require batteries and have a 64k boot sector configured as drive A:, with the remainder available for program storage as drive D:. For a complete review of these cards see page 3 of this issue.

Compax Price Reductions

In Issue 6 of *The Portfolio Connection* Newsletter we reported on some interesting programs available from Compax in Australia. At the time, a price tag of about £75 per program before addition of VAT and import charges made them too expensive for most users. However, recent price reductions by Compax has brought the average price per ROM card down to about £56 including VAT & P+P, which is much better value. In view of this, we have now obtained some of them for evaluation and will be reviewing them in a future issue of the newsletter. If you can't wait, contact us on (0491) 836880 for further details.

Slave Plus

Slave Plus is an improved version of the Slave file transfer program found in Set CM1. It enables file transfer between your Portfolio and a wide variety of computers via the serial interface. Slave Plus comes on a ROM card with a suitable serial connection cable and normally retails for £66.90 which includes VAT & P+P. However, for a limited period we are able to offer Slave Plus for just **£44.90** including VAT & P+P! Also available are companion programs for PC, Mac and ST which are designed to link with Slave Plus and allow multiple file transfers in one session. These cost £20.95 including VAT & P+P. Please note that the special price on Slave Plus is a limited offer, so contact us without delay if you are interested.

Faster Portfolio?

How would you like a Portfolio with a 6.5 MHz clock speed instead of the original 4.9 MHz? A German reader has just had his Portfolio "tuned" with 320k RAM and a 6.5 MHz quartz! He says, "If you've ever worked with a Port like that, you'll never want the original back!" A German version of the "Do-It-Yourself-Manual" for this internal memory upgrade is nearly completed. What started as a brief description of the project has now became a very detailed manual. As soon as the English version is ready, it is going to be made available together with some photos of the most important changes of the motherboard. The price will be about £20 and we'll be sure to let you know as soon as we hear anything!

more next issue....

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Notes on Parallel File Transfer to an Atari ST

We have a number of requests from ST owners wishing to use the Portfolio's built-in parallel file transfer program to transfer files between their Portfolio and ST, particularly using the ST-Folio program in Set ST3.

As some of you may know, this presents problems as the Portfolio built-in file transfer was designed to operate with the parallel port on an IBM PC. The ST parallel port has a different configuration and is not compatible without the addition of a special cable and software. This is available commercially as a program called Swift ST Link which comes with the necessary cable.

ST-Folio is an earlier, shareware version of ST Link. It has a 10k file transfer limit, needs a special cable (instructions are included) and will only work with some ST's.

We are not very familiar with ST's, but with the help of one of our readers, Mr C C Goodwin, were able to put ST-Folio to the test. Mr Goodwin already owns ST Link and tried using ST-Folio with the ST Link cable. This is what he told us:

"The ST-Folio program works fine with the ST Link cable as long as the ST is using TOS 1.4 or higher. As a rough guide the STE's started with 1.4. Nearly all of the STFM's have 1.2 except for a few of the last STFM's which got 1.4 but no other STE benefits."

The cable is moderately complicated to make needing a 74HC125 integrated circuit and a resistor soldered into the cable. In the commercial version this is achieved by a small custom circuit board soldered into one of the plug housings. Due to the difficulty of making and testing such a cable we do not supply them but a cable diagram is included in Set ST3. Let us know if you are successful!

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A Review of The Optrol 524k Flash Memory Card

Low Cost - High Capacity Storage

The Optrol 524k Flash Memory Card offers the Portfolio user high capacity memory card storage at a price which is much lower than anything else available at the moment. However, as we shall see in this review, there are some drawbacks to Flash memory storage, but, for those of you that need a high-capacity card, the Optrol card may be the ideal and economic solution.

What is Flash Ram?

The difference between the Optrol card and the conventional memory card is that the former uses flash memory chips for storage whilst the latter use SRAM chips. One advantage of Flash RAM is that batteries are not required to maintain the data - it is 'burned in' to the memory whereas SRAM needs battery power to keep the stored information updated otherwise it would be lost.

So far, this sounds too good to be true - high capacity storage and no batteries! However, there are some drawbacks. The first is that a driver is needed in order for the Portfolio to recognise and use flash memory and this will take up some of your precious internal RAM. Having said that, with 524k of storage space for files, you can reduce your C: drive to the minimum 8k and free up the precious internal RAM that had been used by your C: drive.

Another drawback has to do with the way in which information is stored in flash RAM. In a conventional memory card, if you edit a file called, say, contact.adr and save it to the card, the memory which contained the old file contact.adr is altered and added to by the new edited version of contact.adr. You effectively write over the file. Not so with flash RAM. The data in a file is 'burned in' to the flash chip and not easily alterable. In this case when you edit your file called contact.adr, the old unedited file is marked as deleted and the new edited version is 'burned in' to a new, unused area of card memory. The deleted file still takes up space and so, gradually, the card space gets filled up with old deleted files.

Thankfully, it is possible to regain this used space via a process known as 'cleaning' the card. The data stored in Flash RAM will not last forever, but with a data retention length of over ten years this is not really a problem for most people.

The Optrol Card

Having explained a little about Flash RAM, we can now move on to the card itself. The card is the same length and width as a standard memory card but is slightly thicker. It fits completely into the Portfolio's memory card slot but is rather a tight fit, at least on the card we were reviewing. The front side of the card is shown in the diagram on the left and, as you can see, provides the user with some handling precautions. The rear side is rather interesting in that it is covered with a clear plastic sheet, so that you can see the circuit board and chips. Whilst this has a novelty value similar to one of those transparent watches, the plastic cover seems somewhat fragile and also gives the card a slightly 'unfinished' feel. I wasn't sure whether I liked this or not.

The Driver Software

In spite of one or two minor problems, I remain very impressed with the driver software which is inspired in its design. The driver software is contained on a special 64k area of the card called the Boot Block. This area is drive A: to your Portfolio, but is write-protected so you cannot accidentally delete the all-important driver files by mistake. Even better, there is a special utility which will allow you to add on or two of your own files to the Boot Block, which is a very safe place for important programs you use (a good example would be Xterm2 for those of you that use it). The remaining seven 64k storage blocks which make up the usual read/write area of the card are seen by your Portfolio as drive D:.

To load the software you simply reboot your Portfolio using Ctrl-Alt-Del with the card inserted and its ready to go -its as simple as that and it works!

Apart from the driver, which takes up about 3k of your internal RAM, a number of other utilities are present. These include a format program to format the D: part of the card, a card cleaning program, a program to create a new customised Boot Block and an augmented chkdsk-type program called FDInfo. This is necessary as the standard chkdsk gives false readings due to the 'dead space' taken up by deleted files. Finally there is a driver and FDInfo program for the PC Card drive which need to be copied across to your PC. Another nice touch is that the card has an on-board 128k RAM disk which is used to temporarily shift files to during the cleaning process. The software author has thoughtfully made this available to the user, if required, as a RAM disk configured as drive E:. This means that, if you are doing a lot of editing on a large file you can temporarily save it to the E: drive until you have finished and then copy to drive D: - this will prevent your Flash Card filling up with deleted files quite so quickly. There is a drawback in that, if the Portfolio switches itself off, you lose the E: drive and everything on it. However, Optrol have thought of this too and included B J Gleason's PD program 'stayon.com' on the card, which prevents the Portfolio from switching itself off.

The Card in Use

As stated previously, performing a Ctrl-Alt-Del with the card in your Portfolio runs a 'start-up' program which creates a new config.sys file or modifies your existing one, to add the appropriate lines to load the driver.

/Continued on Page 4

A Review of The Optrol 524k Flash Memory Card - cont.

The Portfolio then reboots, checks that the driver is correctly loaded and you are ready to go.

In use, the only noticeable difference was that saving files took slightly longer than for the standard memory card, but this was no real problem. According to the documentation, the card adds only about 3% to the load on the Portfolio's batteries with normal use although use of the AC adaptor or a fresh set of batteries is recommended when formatting or cleaning the card.

When the card reached a point where under 64k of free space was left a message appeared as I saved a file, reminding me it was time to clean the card. I ignored this initially to see what would happen, but got the reminder message each time I subsequently tried to save a file. I certainly got the message that it was time to clean the card!

Cleaning the card was not a problem. I connected the AC adaptor, set the clean program running and went off to make a cup of tea. On my return the clean was completed, an additional 200k on my card and no lost data! In the cleaning process, files from each chip are copied to the RAM disk, the flash chip is erased and the files are then copied back to the flash chip. The cleaning process appears to take between 3 and 5 minutes and constant messages inform you of the current stage in the cleaning process. It is important not to manually turn off your Port during this process.

Creating a Customised Boot Block

To do this you need to Fdisk your C: drive to 66k. You then copy the files you wish to have on the Boot Block to the C: drive and run the special 'makebt' program. The complete C: drive is then copied to the Boot Block on the card (including the 'system' directory if it is present, so make sure you remove this first!). Your chosen files are then safely stored on the Boot Block of the card.

Problems with the BSE I/O Interface

With the basic Portfolio, the card seemed to operate perfectly. unfortunately this was not the case with the BSE I/O Interface. The card worked fine initially, but then some of the files seemed to become corrupted during the read/write process and eventually the Boot Block itself became corrupted! This is a good reason to follow the advice in the instructions to back up the Boot Block files, for without them the card will not operate. Apparently, I am not the only one to experience problems with the card in use with the BSE Interface. Optrol thought they had tracked the problem down, which is presumably due to memory conflicts in the Portfolio, but the difficulty is that it does not seem to be a problem with all BSE Interfaces. However, they are working on it. In the meantime, it would be wise to use the card cautiously in conjunction with the BSE I/O Interface.

The PC Card Drive Utilities

As stated earlier, the card comes with two programs to enable the use of the card with the PC Card Drive. These are a driver and a PCInfo program which is the equivalent of the FDInfo program for the card.

I installed the driver with no problems and having done so discovered that , like on the Portfolio, my card drive now consisted of two drives (D: and E: on my desktop) which correspond to the A: and D: sections of the card on the Port. Whilst I had no problems reading from the card, I found I was unable to write to the card. Optrol informed me that there was a problem in writing to some card drives which they were trying to track down. In addition I use DRDOS 6.0 rather than MSDOS which, to be fair could be adding to the problem.

Summary

In use with a standard Portfolio, I found the operation of the card to be faultless and the software does an excellent job in making the drawbacks of Flash RAM memory storage almost transparent to the user. It is a shame that the card does not seem to operate correctly at the moment with the BSE Interfaces and the PC Card Drive but hopefully, Optrol will sort out these problems in due course. We will, for our part, certainly make any updated drivers available as soon as they appear. If you need high-capacity storage on your Portfolio and do not use the BSE Interface or PC Card Drive extensively, then the Optrol Flash Memory Card would seem to be an ideal solution.

The Optrol 524k Flash Memory Card costs £179.95 including VAT & P+P and is available on a 10 day 'No Questions Asked' money-back guarantee. In addition you can spread the cost by sending us two cheques: One for £89.95 payable immediately and one for £90 post-dated for a month's time - contact us here at *The Portfolio Connection* for more details.

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The PBasic Column

Unfortunately, due to lack of space we are unable to bring you Part two of 'Working with the Spreadsheet' in this issue. It will therefore be postponed until the next issue of *The Portfolio Connection* Newsletter.

Programs Wanted

We have received a number of requests from budding programmers who would like to see listings of PBasic programs in the Newsletter which they can type in and try out. If you have any PBasic programs you have written, why not share them with the rest of the Portfolio community? Send the listings to us, along with a working copy on 5¼" or 3½" disk. We will give a free Set from our libraries for each one published

Converting Other Programs

Remember that the squeeze program SPB (in Set PB1) can be used on GWBasic and other Basic programs to virtually prepare them for use with PBasic. Some editing and modification may still be required but the majority of the work will be done for you.

PBasic (currently version 5.0) is a public domain BASIC interpreter for the Portfolio, written by B J Gleason of The American University.

```
HyperList 1.00 ═══ by Mike Pooler
Copyright (C) 1991 Atari Corporation
All rights reserved.        PLANETS.HL
```

HyperList Review

What is HyperList?

HyperList is probably one of the most useful programs created for the Portfolio. It is best described as an Information Manager and Ideas Organiser and its beauty is that it is so versatile it can be used in a variety of ways to perform many different functions.

It is, in effect, similar to the Portfolio Address Book application but greatly enhanced and extended. In the address book you have a page of index lines of say, names, and pressing enter on any of the lines will take you into a sub-page containing further details - for example the address attached to the name.

With HyperList, pressing enter on an index line can take you to another page of index lines or 'sublist' as it's called in HyperList. Pressing enter on a sublist item can open to a further level of sublists or subnotes (attached text), and so on. This creates a branching tree of information:

```
1st Level------|- 2nd level item-------|-3rd level item
               |                       |-3rd level item
               |- 2nd level item-------|-SubNote (i.e. text)
               |
               |- 2nd level item-------|-3rd level item--|-4th level item
                                                         |-4th level item
```

Using HyperList, you can organise any type of information in the way that best suits your needs.

.RUN Files Explained

HyperList is supplied on a ROM card in two versions, HL.EXE and HL.RUN along with a number of sample HyperList data files (which end with the extension .hl).

For those of you unfamiliar with .RUN files, these are special memory-saving versions of programs available on the Portfolio. Normally, an .exe or .com file is loaded up into the Portfolio's 100k or so of available RAM. Larger programs (like HyperList) will take up quite a lot of RAM leaving only a little space for the information part of the program, which restricts the size of data files you can create. A .RUN program is not loaded into the Portfolio's internal RAM but read from the memory card as if it was an extra part of the internal RAM. This useful feature is one of the Portfolio's special capabilities that is a boon with the Portfolio's limited memory.

So, I hear you ask, why not make all Portfolio programs in .RUN format? Well, there are a few drawbacks. As the Portfolio reads the card as part of its internal memory, this means that the card cannot be withdrawn whilst the program is running. As you cannot therefore put in another memory card to store your data, you must use the C: drive to store any .hl files. Another drawback is that .RUN files must not be 'fragmented'. This is no problem on a ROM card as the information is fixed, but it is if you copy a program to a standard memory card. Due to the way data is stored, parts of the program can end up stored in different locations on the disk and the file is then 'fragmented' and will not operate. This is not a problem with .com or .exe files so you need to weigh up the pros and cons and decide which is the best version for you to use.

Using HyperList

The instructions that come with HyperList are comprehensive and easy to understand. On the whole the program uses the standard Portfolio menu format and commands so if you are familiar with say, the address book, learning HyperList will not be too difficult. A number of sample .hl data files are included on the ROM card which is helpful. In addition, the .hl file data is stored in the familiar Portfolio 'text file' format and is not dissimilar to the way in which address book files are stored. HyperList can import address book files and text files.

When you start HyperList without any additional parameters, it will automatically load the last file used in the same way as the other Portfolio applications. However, a useful feature is that you can also specify a file to load on start-up so if you wanted to work on planets.hl you would type:

hl planets

and this file would be loaded when HyperList starts. This simple time-saving feature is not available in the other Portfolio applications.

A number of features enable you to navigate your way through a HyperList file. The top line is the name of the 'parent' item and anything below the line is a sublist or subtext. A '<' symbol to the left of a 'parent' item indicates that the item itself is a sublist item of another 'parent' item. A '<┘' symbol by the side of a line indicates a sublist or subnote is attached to the line (see Fig 1).

```
◀ Saturn
  Diameter: 75,000 miles
  Orbit:    886 million miles
  Day:      10.4 Earth hours
  Year:     29.46 Earth years
◀┘ 17 Moons
```

Fig 1 - a typical HyperList display

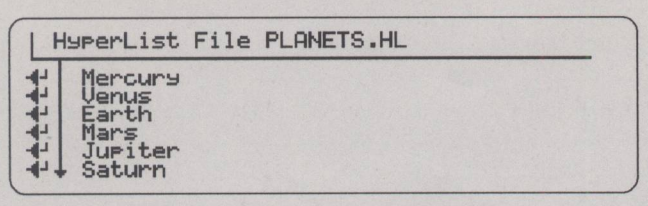
In the example above, 'Diameter', 'Orbit', 'Day', 'Year' and 'Moons' are sublist items belonging to the item 'Saturn'. The '<' to the left of 'Saturn' indicates that Saturn itself is a sublist item belonging to the Parent list of planets (the parent display is shown on page 6 by the article heading). The '<┘' by the side of '17 Moons' shows that a sublist is attached to this item. Pressing 'Enter' in browse mode or Shift+Enter in edit mode will access this sublist (see Fig 2 below).

```
◀ Saturn, 17 Moons
  Atlas
  Calypso
  Dione
  Electra (or Helene)
  Enceladus
▼ Epimetheus
```

Fig 2 - the '17 Moons' sublist

Fig 2 shows an additional useful feature accessed by pressing Fn+6. This is that the parent items are shown on the top line along with the item itself, separated by commas. This helps you remember where you are in the file.

/Continued on Page 6



HyperList Review cont.

Another useful navigational feature that is an alternative or addition to Fn+6 is shown in Fig 3 below. This status bar is accessed by pressing Fn+5 and gives the name of the file, the number of levels into the file and the line and character positions of the cursor.

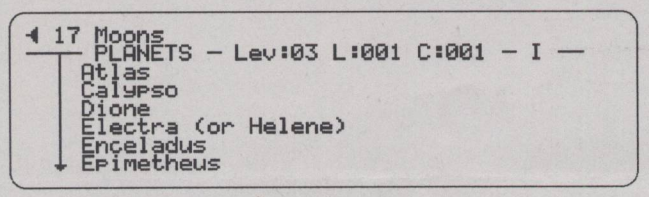


Fig 3 - the 'Status Bar'

The 'I' on the right hand side indicates that the keyboard is in 'Insert' mode. If the file has been altered then double wavy lines will appear to the right of the 'I' symbol as it does in the other Portfolio applications.

A grey bar to the left of text indicates that the item is a subnote (see Fig 4).

Sublists and Subnotes

Two types of subitem are possible, a sublist and a subnote:

- A Sublist item - is a line up to 200 characters long which will scroll off the left of the screen if necessary. A sublist item can contain further subitems.
- A Subnote item - allows you to attach a paragraph or more of text to a sublist item. A note automatically word-wraps and can contain up to 2000 characters and 600 lines of text - enough for most needs! A subnote cannot contain any subitem so is the end of a branch, as it were.

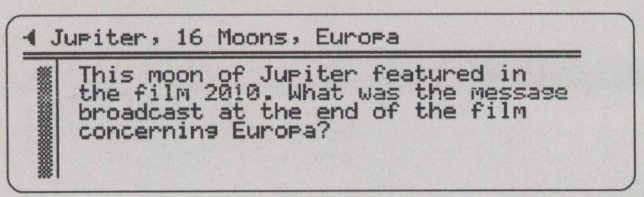


Fig 4 - screen display showing a 'subnote'

A hyperlist file can contain up to 24 levels, which I would have thought is more than most Portfolio users would ever need.

Browse and Edit

HyperList allows two modes of operation, browse and edit. Browse is a viewing only mode that gives access to all parts of a HyperList file but does not allow you to alter it. This has two benefits. The first is that you cannot accidentally delete important information and the second is that it is slightly quicker to use.

As the name suggests, Edit mode allows you to modify a HyperList file as well as view it. In this mode you have access to all of HyperList's features but the key sequences are necessarily more complex.

The Menus

Once HyperList is started, pressing Fn+1 (or the Atari key) will bring up the familiar Portfolio Main Menu. The options available from this menu will vary depending on whether you are in 'browse' or 'edit' mode. Below is a summary of what is available from the more extensive 'edit' mode. The **Files** Sub-Menu allows you to:

- Create a new .hl file
- Load and save existing files
- Insert another HyperList, address book or text file
- Print a HyperList file

The **Search** Sub-Menu allows you to search, replace or jump to a certain letter (useful if you have a long list).
The **View** Sub-Menu allows you to switch views between 'parent' lists and sublists.
The **Create** Sub-Menu allows the creation of sublists or subnotes.
The **Action** Sub-Menu has three useful features:

- Sort List - alphabetical sort of list items
- Tally List - this is a very useful feature. Tally will add the first figure it comes to on each sublist item and total on the parent item. For example:

1st Qtr Expenses **£1117.06**		←Tally puts total here
January	£325.61	⇨ Tally takes the figures in these
February	£257.98	⇨ columns and places the total
March	£533.47	⇨ in the '1st Qtr' line above.

- Dial - will dial the first number on the line where the cursor is, using the Portfolio's speaker.

The final item on the main menu is **Quit**. As you would expect, you are prompted whether you wish to save any changes made when you exit the program.

Pressing Fn+2 gives access to a help page telling you whether you are in browse mode or edit mode with help specific to that mode.

Fn+3 gives access to the Portfolio clipboard in edit mode and Fn+4 will perform an undelete (only in edit mode). Hot keys are available to perform most of the menu commands quickly, direct from the keyboard. For example, Ctrl+S will put up a search box.

Summary

Overall, I found HyperList very comprehensive and intuitive in use. My only complaint is a minor one really and has to do with some of the key combinations. In browse mode, pressing Enter on an item will take you into the subitem. In edit mode pressing Enter on an item will CREATE another item and Shift+Enter will take you into the subitem. Well, I wish they had reversed these keys in edit mode. Whether in browse or edit mode I intuitively tend to hit Enter to get to the subitem. Of course in edit mode this creates a new item instead and I am forever deleting additional items I have accidentally created in this way!

An added bonus is that the HL.EXE version of HyperList will also run on an IBM-compatible PC making it easy to transfer and modify files between these two computers. HyperList is an extremely versatile and useful program and one can't help wishing that it had come as one of the built-in applications. Still better late than never! HyperList is available from *The Portfolio Connection* for £39.95 including VAT & P+P, a £10 saving on RRP!

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The Lynx Kit Case

A Storage Solution for the Portfolio?

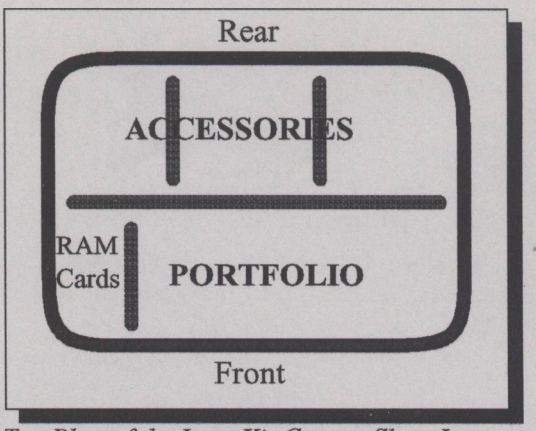
Here at last is the review of the Lynx Kit Case as a potential carrying case for your Portfolio and accessories.

As the name suggests, the case is actually designed for Atari's Lynx Colour Game Console. It is made of a strong resistant nylon and is well padded both inside and out.

It measures 12" wide x 10" deep x 3½" high (300mm x 255mm x 90mm) and resembles a small suitcase. It has a detachable shoulder strap as well as a hand grip and both are of a tough nylon webbing. Four plastic feet are attached to the side opposite the hand grip allowing the case to be stood on its side. The top opening is, again, similar to a suitcase and is fastened by an all round zip with two toggles. The top has a small Atari Lynx badge sewn on.

Inside the compartment is padded nylon and has a number of padded divider walls which can be optionally attached using the Velcro fasteners. There is one long widthways divider and three small dividers which allow you to arrange the compartments to some degree.

The diagram opposite shows a plan of the layout as seen from above, with a suggested positioning scheme. One useful feature is that the case is wide enough to hold a Portfolio with a peripheral such as the BSE I/O Interface attached and by slipping it under the bottom left divider, Portfolio and attached peripheral can be held securely.



Top Plan of the Lynx Kit Case to Show Layout

Alternatively, if just the Portfolio is put in the case, then the small left hand compartment could be used for RAM cards - as shown in the diagram. The other pockets allow ample room for AC adaptor, one or two peripherals, cables etc.

One frustration is the inside lid. This consists of three rows of four see-through pockets, designed for Lynx game card storage. This would be ideal for storing memory cards - except for the fact that the pockets are just too small! Oh well, you can't have everything I suppose.....

We have been using the Lynx Kit Case for some months now and have found it to be very durable. It is well-padded enough to protect your Portfolio from the majority of knocks and holds your Portfolio, along with a reasonable amount of kit, securely in place. It is also light and not too bulky to carry.

This case is not a perfect solution for 'Port-ability' but certainly a workable one. I guess in the end it comes down to your personal needs and taste. We do not stock the Lynx Kit Case but picked ours up in Toys R Us for a few pence under £15.

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New this Issue

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1...

- **DMP** - this is a print spooler which I have had limited success using on the Portfolio. However, it is included here because it comes with a lovely utility called **pf.com** which will print files direct from the DOS command line. Pf.com does work on the Port.
- **DSPrint** - this is another program which will print and format text files from the Portfolio. Allows double-sided printing.
- **Page.com** - page formatter which will print text files from the Portfolio. Enables the addition of page numbers and headers.
- **PDSW** - a public domain sideways printing utility which works on the Port. Great for spreadsheets. needs a dot matrix or bubblejet printer.
- **PRHooks** - these are stand alone versions of the editor hooks mentioned in last issue. They will embed basic printer codes into editor text for Bold, Underline and Italics. Versions are included for Epson, HP Deskjet and HP Laserjet printers.
- **Spfx.com** - this will remove the offending space at the end of a text file which is crashing your Port due to the bug in the Port's ROM.
- **Tiny.com** - this little program will cause an Epson compatible printer to print in a tiny font.
- **Wc.com** - fast word counter.
- **Con2con** - this program will echo anything you type to the screen to any device you specify. Eg. directing output to a printer will allow you to use the Port like a simple typewriter.
- **ZZ** - this is a small and simple alternative editor which will work with the Port. Personally, I'd stick with the built-in editor, but there's no accounting for taste...

The set also includes the following Pread files:

- **Atax** - a full length 'Star Trek - The Next Generation' story in three parts.
- **Belief** - Steve Martin: 'What I believe...'
- **Jackh** - Deep Thoughts from Jack Handey. A funny text.
- **Rhps** - full script from the 'Rocky Horror Picture Show'.

New Additions

There are no new files added to existing sets this month. However, in the pipeline we still have:

AP6 - Applications 6
GM4 - Games 4
GR5 - Graphics 5
PB3 - PBasic 3
PG8 - a new languages set
UT4 - Utilities 4

More next issue.....

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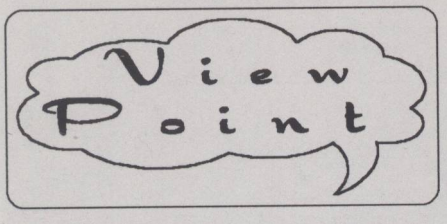

Readers' Letters and Tips

Dear Ed

With reference to the search for Port cases, try the Sega Game Gear range. I find them ideal and there are many to choose from.

Steve Rosewell

Dear Ed

Enclosed you'll find the case I use for carrying my port about. This was just a lucky find about a year ago (in MAKRO I think...). It was free with a pack of Memorex blank video tapes. And that's what it was apparently designed for; -to carry one video cassette about. It snugly takes my Port plus two cards. It's tough, quite well padded and easy to get in and out of. Looks pretty neat too. It's very obviously mass produced and if Memorex could give them away with a couple of tapes, this could be a cheap and useful answer to many people's Port portability problem. I figured that maybe you could find the source and buy a bundle. I'd certainly buy another from you, and the Port using friends I've shown it to have immediately wanted one.

Boo Bennett

....thanks to you both for the case ideas. I've not seen the Sega cases but it would appear that cases for Portable game consoles would also be a good bet for carrying the Port around. The case sent to us by Mr Bennett was a soft black vinyl case trimmed in red and about 9" x 5½" in size. Please keep any case tips you have coming.

Editor

Dear Ed

I have a card drive installation problem. I use MS Windows on my PC with Norton Desktop as my shell. With my card drive installed from boot up, Windows (or maybe it's Norton Desktop?) reads it as a ram drive and calls it drive E, and as there is no card in the drive, the system thinks there is a problem. i.e. When I click on the drive icons for either my hard drive or floppy for file management I keep getting a 'Cannot read from drive E' error dialogue box. This means that, rather than being able to leave my card drive installed for use at any time, I have to run a separate version of my config.sys and make it a special card drive session. This is very frustrating as my Port has become an integral part of my everyday work. I've tried adding the DOS driver.sys option extensions to the cd.sys line to make the system treat it as a floppy drive; and therefore not expect to access the drive until a card is in. But they don't work. I didn't have any problem with this when I worked in DOS. Any ideas?

Boo Bennett

.....thanks for your second letter which highlights a problem which many PC Card Drive users will have experienced. The problem you describe appears to be due to the way in which DOS interacts with the PC Card driver program cd.sys. The problem seems to happen more frequently in Windows but also occurs with some DOS programs. I'm afraid that no-one has come up with a permanent solution except to keep a card in the drive - the drive will then be recognised as existing by the programs you describe. If you are lucky enough to have the FM Tutorial ROM card then it is a good idea to leave this in the drive permanently.

Editor

Dear Ed

Perhaps it would be of general interest to readers of "Portfolio Connection Newsletter" if you invited readers to send in descriptions of known causes of the dreaded "system error" message. This error is described as being "exceptionally rare" on page 236 of the owners manual. However despite having only recently acquired a Portfolio computer I have managed to generate the system error message.

I found that saving an empty editor file was the cause of the problem. This in itself didn't generate the error. However the next time the editor was accessed it attempted to load the file last saved and the system error was produced. Pressing escape repeatedly did not make the error go away. A warm re-boot using the reset button cleared the system error but generated a "division by zero" error. A cold re-boot was necessary to make the system function properly.

I confirmed the above cause by saving an empty editor file several times and each time the error was produced. I also tried saving empty files in the other applications i.e. spreadsheet, address book and diary. However in these cases an error was not produced.

In case you are wondering, I initially saved the empty text file so as to change the default editor directory. The ROM version of my machine is v1.072.

Paul McCloskey

.....the Portfolio ROM's (all versions) have a number of bugs and the empty text file problem you describe is one of them. Having a 'space+return' at the end of a text file will also produce a 'system error'. A program called update.com is available which corrects all known ROM bugs and, once loaded as a tsr, will remain until the next reboot and virtually eliminate these problems by trapping the errors as they occur. These and other problems were described in more detail in issues 3 and 4 of the newsletter. Update.com is available in Set UT1, but we have started to include it in all Sets we send out, providing there is enough room on the disk! Alternatively, send us a blank disk and £1 to cover copying and return postage and we'll put it on the disk for you. We always like to hear of any problems people have experienced with their Portfolios and, where possible, will offer a solution. We'd also like to hear from those of you who have overcome a particular problem on the Portfolio and how you managed it.

Editor

Send your letters/tips to:

The Portfolio Connection
Bucklands Cottage
Wallingford Road
Cholsey
Oxon OX10 9HB

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BSE Competition Winners! ✸✸✸

Well! At long last we have some winners in our long-running BSE I/O Interface Subscriber Prize Draw. Just to remind you the prizes on offer were a BSE I/O Interface as first prize, a Portfolio Leather Carrying Case as second prize and a third prize of a free subscription to *The Portfolio Connection* Newsletter or equivalent. The winners are as follows:

- **1st Prize: Richard Bennett of Durham**
- **2nd Prize: Graham Handforth of Hull**
- **3rd Prize: W Wright of Shoreham**

Congratulations to you all - you'll be receiving your prizes shortly.

Thanks also go to everybody who sent us their program ideas. Even if you were unlucky in the competition, you may still see your program idea come into being over the next few months.

What's more, if we do produce a program from **your** idea, you will be receiving a free complimentary copy!

Don't forget, we like to hear of any Portfolio program ideas you may have, with or without a competition!

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Beginners Column

Navigating the Keyboard - Part 4

This issue we come to the last part of navigating the keyboard and take a look at the special keys on the bottom row of the keyboard.

The Atari Key

The red Atari key (/|\), or system key, has a number of useful functions when used in combination with other keys. Clues are provided on the keyboard for, wherever you see red, it involves the use of the Atari key.

Application Hotkeys - the following key combinations will get you quickly into the various applications:

- /|\ + W Worksheet
- /|\ + E Editor
- /|\ + A Address Book
- /|\ + S Set up Menu
- /|\ + D Diary
- /|\ + Z Applications Menu
- /|\ + C Calculator

Numlock - there is an embedded numerical keypad in the keyboard which is accessed by pressing /|\ and the 'Lock' key. To assist in identification, the keypad numbers and symbols are coloured red and situated toward the right of the keyboard. The cursor also changes from a block to a line.

Contrast - people often forget that they can increase or decrease the contrast of the Portfolio display to improve its readability:

- /|\ + ↑ Increase Contrast
- /|\ + ↓ Decrease Contrast

The Function Key

The blue function key provides many useful combinations and again, some of the combination keys are coloured blue to assist in identification. The function key is 'sticky' which means that you don't have to hold the key down whilst you press the combination key.

The most well known combinations are the Function key and the numbers 1 to 0 which give access to the Function keys, F1 to F10 found on a conventional PC keyboard. Also indicated on the keyboard are:

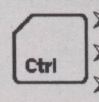
- Fn + ← Home
- Fn + → End
- Fn + ↑ Page Up
- Fn + ↓ Page Dn
- Fn + O Turn Portfolio Off

The following combinations are also available:

- Fn + B Ctrl Break
- Fn + C Caps Lock
- Fn + N Num Lock
- Fn + P Print Screen
- Fn + Q Ctrl Numlock
- Fn + S Scroll Lock
- Fn + Del Insert/Overwrite Toggle

The Ctrl Key

There are a few combinations available here:



- Ctrl + Fn + N Ctrl NumLock
- Ctrl + Fn + P Print Screen
- Ctrl + Fn + S Ctrl Break

In the built-in applications the following Ctrl key combinations are usually possible:

- Ctrl + A Move to top of file
- Ctrl + Z Move to end of file
- Ctrl + ↑ Move to top of file
- Ctrl + ↓ Move to end of file
- Ctrl + ← Move to previous word
- Ctrl + → Move to next word
- Ctrl + E Delete to end of line
- Ctrl + B Delete to start of line
- Ctrl + L Delete line

There are other Ctrl key combinations specific to each application - check your user manual for details.

The Alt Key

The following Alt key combinations are possible:

- Alt [Gives the £ sign
- Alt] Gives the ~ symbol
- Alt ' Gives the ` symbol
- Alt ← Shift screen left in static or tracked mode
- Alt → Shift screen right in static or tracked mode
- Alt ↑ Shift screen up in static or tracked mode
- Alt ↓ Shift screen down in static or tracked mode

High ASCII Characters - When the Num Lock is on, the Alt key can be used to insert non-keyboard characters into text, using the embedded numerical keypad. For example, holding down the Alt key and pressing the numbers 1, 7, and 2 (Alt + 172) will enter the ¼ symbol into text. Note that the symbol will only appear after the Alt key has been released and the numbers must be entered from the embedded numerical keypad for it to work.

This brings us to the end of our mini series on navigating the Portfolio keyboard. More hints and tips for new users in the next issue.

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Classifieds

- **For Sale: Pbase database** Rom card c/w manual £35 ono. Will swap for Finance card or Science card. Ring Andy on (0484) 722491.

- **For Sale: Atari Portfolio**, 64K Memory Card, Parallel Interface, Mains Adaptor, All disks, diskettes and Instruction Manual + User Guide. £130. Contact M.C. Deacon (0483) 416194.

- **For Sale: Atari Portfolio**, Parallel Interface IBM, Peter Baron Book - £90 post paid. Contact H.S. Lee (055) 666-321.

- **For Sale: Vidi ST** and Vidi Chrome still boxed - hardly used £60 ONO or swap for Parallel Peripheral and Swift ST Link or other Portfolio accessories considered. Richard Bennett (091) 378-2839 or 383-0822.

- **Wanted: Parallel Interface**, selling serial interface. Contact Andrew Lewis (0922) 477566

Buyers & Sellers Directory

Some classifieds did not reach the newsletter as we are often phoned by people wanting Portfolio peripherals and, where possible, refer them to those of you who are selling equipment. As a result, we are starting a Buyers & Sellers Directory - contact *The Portfolio Connection* and let us know what you are selling. We will enter this into a directory. Those of you who are after specific Portfolio items can contact us and we will put you in touch with the sellers. Any items not sold by the next Newsletter will go in as classifieds. This should make for a quicker turnover all round so we'll try this scheme for a few months and see how it goes.

The Portfolio Connection Newsletter Classifieds are FREE. Send your advert to :

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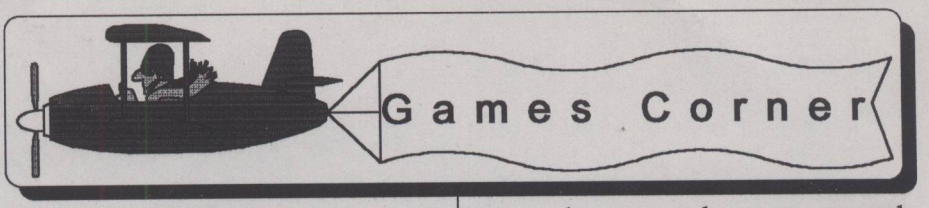


Pattern Puzzle

by Pete Bennett

Another biased review this issue I'm afraid as, once again, the game was written by me!

Like Zeros, reviewed in the last issue, Pattern is based on an idea from the "Explorer's Guide to the ZX Spectrum and ZX81" by Kasper Boon, but, like Zeros, has been completely modified and re-written for the Portfolio. Thankfully, however, Pattern is a much easier game than Zeros to complete successfully!

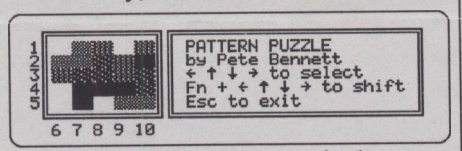


Fig. 1 - A typical starting screen for the game

The program is written in Atari Portfolio Powerbasic and therefore needs the pbrun.com tsr loaded before it will operate. Once loaded, pbrun.com can be removed from your disk. The program will only work on a Portfolio and will NOT run on a standard IBM PC or compatible.

The Game

The game consists of a 5x5 grid of five different types of shaded square. When the game starts the squares are scrambled in a random manner (see Fig. 1). The arrow keys are used to move the cursor up and down the rows, marked 1 to 5 and along the columns, marked 6 to 10.

Using the Fn + the arrow keys, it is possible to shift the row or column marked by the cursor left or right, or up or down respectively. Pattern squares which disappear from one end of a column or row 'rotate' to appear at the other end.

In the example below (Fig. 2), the cursor can be positioned on the number 10 using the left and right arrow keys. Pressing Fn + ↓ (down arrow), will shift the right-hand column down to complete the game.

The game includes instructions if required and has been tested with ROM versions 1.072 and 1.030. When you do manage to complete the game, you are treated to a short musical jingle (a different one to that in Zeros!)

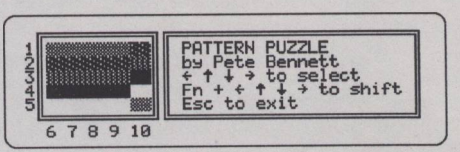
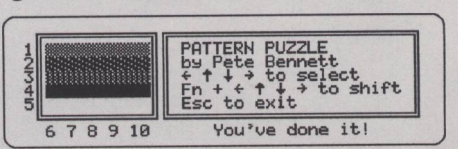


Fig. 2 - Just one move away from victory!

Pattern Puzzle can be found in Set PW2 - PowerBasic 2 Plus, and is good fun - even if I do say so myself!



Next Issue:

Next issue will be reviewing some of the programs available from the Australian company, Compax. Their range includes Slave Plus, PDB - a database, the Compax Utilities, PortGraph and more.

We have a number of enquiries from folk who are not sure what to do when their Port seizes up so next issue we'll be giving you some hints and tips designed to salvage your data if at all possible.

We have also had a number of spreadsheet related items sent in over the last few months which we will be including in a 'Spreadsheet Special'.

Don't forget to send us *your* news, views and reviews - although you may think it is not important, it may be just the information another reader needs *and* each item published will receive free, with our compliments, a *Portfolio Connection* PD/Shareware disk of their choice.

Look out as well for the following regular Newsletter items:

- The PBasic Column
- Beginner's Column

The next issue of *The Portfolio Connection* Newsletter is due out the last week in July, but for those of you reading the newsletter for the first time, remember:

YOU MUST SUBSCRIBE TO RECEIVE YOUR COPY!

Subscription costs just £7.50 a year - see the enclosed subscription form.

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